and confirm the appointments. This is just another annoyance to add to the soup of discontent.

It is understandable that the number of family physicians in active general practice is declining.

—Alan L. Russell, MD
Brampton, Ont
by fax

Reference

Physician shortage: results are inconsistent

I am writing in response to Dr Ross McElroy’s letter¹ in the March issue concerning Canada’s shortage of physicians. As he stated, numerous factors contribute to this shortage.

A major factor is the large number of physicians who entered the Canadian physician work force in the 1960s and who are now reaching retirement age. The services provided by these retiring physicians are not being replaced by the reduced number of new graduates with different lifestyle goals (as noted by Dr McElroy).

His suggestion, however, that 18% of Canadian physicians who graduated from 1991 and 1995 have left Canada for the United States is inconsistent with results of ongoing research in this area. Although the number of new graduates going to the United States either before or after residency training was relatively higher than usual in the early 1990s, our data indicate that 9.1% of Canadian medical graduates (1991-1995) had located their practices in the United States as of 2003.² This proportion has been decreasing in recent years so that 5 years after exiting from postgraduate training in 1998, 6% of Canadian graduates had relocated to the United States in 2003.³ (In addition, about 3% to 4% of Canadian graduates go to the United States before postgraduate training, and a proportion return to Canada.²)

—Dianne Thurber
Director, Canadian Post-MD Education Registry
Ottawa, Ont
by fax

References
2. Canadian Post-MD Education Registry [database on disk]. Ottawa, Ont: Association of Canadian Medical Colleges.